

TESTIMONY

Submitted by Tracy Wodatch
President and CEO

Human Services Committee Public Hearing
February 7, 2023

SB 946 AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONNECTICUT HOME-CARE PROGRAM FOR THE ELDERLY

Senator Lesser, Representative Gilchrist and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Tracy Wodatch. I am the President and CEO at the CT Association for Healthcare at Home, the united voice for the DPH-licensed home health care agencies.

I am here before you today to address the proposal in SB 946 to change the Medicaid state plan to include up to two social work visits per participant in CHCPE.

A little background...home health care agencies are licensed by DPH and certified by Medicare to provide skilled, medical services including nursing, social work, physical/occupational and speech therapy. Both our federal Medicare and our state DPH regulations require that we provide social work services which ARE reimbursed by Medicare and commercial insurances; however, home health social work services are NOT covered by Medicaid.

While we support SB 946, we cannot and should not limit the coverage to just two visits per participant in CHCPE. We need a home health Medicaid Social Work rate for both waiver and non-waiver Medicaid patients.

Let me explain the expertise of a Social Worker in Home Health. They are highly trained, minimally master's prepared, to provide support and resources to patients and their families. With more people wanting to stay in their homes, Home Health Social Workers serve a key role as they are able to assess needs and match them with community resources, address mental health challenges, and support the psychosocial/emotional needs of those with serious illnesses.

Now more than ever with the unwinding of the Public Health Emergency, Social Workers are necessary to ensure their patients' Medicaid eligibility continues without interruption.



These are all skills and services that help people stay in their homes, the least costly setting. In addition, the patients served by the licensed home health care agencies are often the sickest, most chronically ill and have extenuating medical and psychosocial issues necessitating social work services to evaluate and recommend appropriate resources and supports. Yet, Medicaid does not pay for their expertise.

There is no other role that can skillfully address a client's social determinants than a Social Worker who assesses the client in THEIR OWN HOME! Social determinants of health have long been addressed by the Home Health Care Agency staff, especially Social Workers. This is not new. Finding a way to support payment for such services through Medicaid is essential to helping the state's rebalancing goals of maintaining people in the community while also optimizing cost savings across the care continuum through reduced hospitalizations, ED visits and other costly institutional settings!

Please consider expanding this proposal to include a Social Work rate for both waiver and non-waiver services provided by a Home Health Care Agency. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and feel free to contact me with any questions.

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